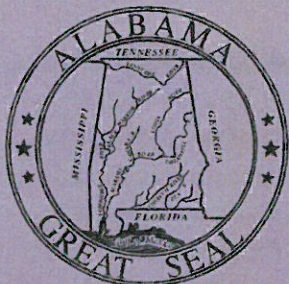


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Black Belt Commission

VOLUME III, ISSUE I

October 2012

"WIDEST YARD SALE" DEEMED A SUCCESS

Alabama Rural Development Office Director Ron Sparks suggested the idea of a mass yard sale patterned after the Longest Yard Sale, an event that meanders from Gadsden to Hudson, Michigan, the first weekend in August each year. Thus, the World's Widest Yard Sale was born and, according to Sparks, the first year of the sale was a huge success. He does admit there are gaps that occurred in the U. S. 80 Route that will be addressed before next year's event, but signs of success dotted the landscape from Phenix City on the east to Cuba on the west.

"Based on positive comments from both the communities and visitors participating in the first ever World's Widest Yard Sale, the ARDO and BBC Marketing and Tourism



Committee whole heartedly endorsed hosting another successful event," stated Pam Swanner, Chair of the Black Belt Marketing and Tourism Committee. "Plans are already underway and the dates of May 31-June 2, 2013, have been established. We encourage anyone who didn't get a chance to hunt for treasures or have your own treasures for sale to be sure and add this to your calendar."

The Black Belt Commission's Marketing and Tourism Committee decided to take on the project of the World's Widest Yard Sale in an effort to stimulate the Black Belt region's economy. The ultimate goal was to bring people into Alabama and into the Black Belt Region to take advantage of the bargains that would be offered for sale, as well as visit the historical sites along the way. Although it's hard to determine the economic impact, the committee knows that out-of-state interest about the yard sale and Alabama was more than it had been before the sale. Data shows that the website had hits from 41 states, which is pretty impressive.

Organized cluster sites were set up in key cities and communities along U. S. Highway 80 in Phenix City, Tuskegee, Pike Road, Montgomery, Selma, Uniontown, Demopolis, Marion, Marion Junction, Livingston, York and Cuba. These sites were listed on the website at www.widestyardsale.com and the ultimate goal was to have designated sites in each location where shoppers could browse and have access to multiple booths. However, that did not exclude participants who wished to set up along U. S. Highway 80 between the planned cluster sites.

In Montgomery, Cramton Bowl was the Capital City's designated location for the sale. Booths offering books, clothing, antiques, sports equipment, art and more were set up by 6 a.m. on the first day of the sale. Due to inclement weather, booths were slow to set up in other areas that did not have cover from the elements, but organizers were confident Friday's and Saturday's sales would be better. Over 35 booths were registered for Saturday's sale.

Sparks drove the route all three days and was pleasantly surprised to find an antique mall close to Tuskegee that normally sees 15 people in a normal day's time that had a record crowd of 600 on the first day of the sale. Emily Law, Black Belt Executive Director, found a great vendor site run by the Lowndesboro Heritage Society at the "Will Stone Store" where items sold benefited the Heritage Society. The ladies working (Continued on page 12) (World's

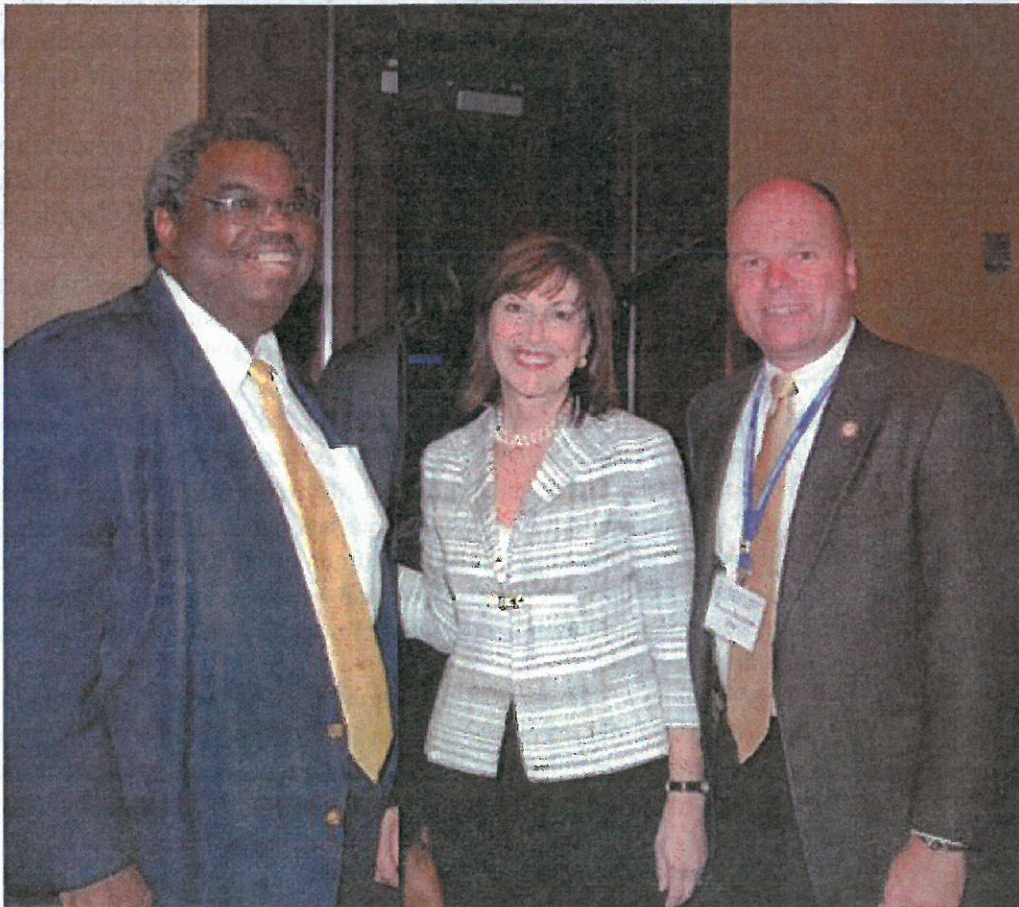
SENATOR HANK SANDERS RETIRES FROM BLACK BELT COMMISSION

After hinting on several occasions he would be "retiring" from the Commission, Senator Hank Sanders made it official by letter to the Commission and the Governor that he had decided to retire from the Black Belt Commission, stating "The Commission is too much a part of me to resign, so I retire."

Senator Sanders said he was with the Commission when it was just an idea discussed between Governor Bob Riley and himself more than seven years ago when it was created by an Executive Order. He further states, "I am proud of what the Black Belt Commission accomplished during my time of service," and he continues to say he is confident the Black Belt region is better off because of the work of this Commission. He urged remaining Co-chairs and Committee Chairs to stay true to the vision and principles upon which the Commission was founded. He reminded them he would be available should he be needed to assist with projects.

In a regular meeting of the Black Belt Commission, Ron Sparks, Director of the Alabama Rural Development Office, presented all Co-Chairs, Committee Chairs, and Regional Commission Directors with proclamations from the House and the Senate commending them for their work with the Commission.

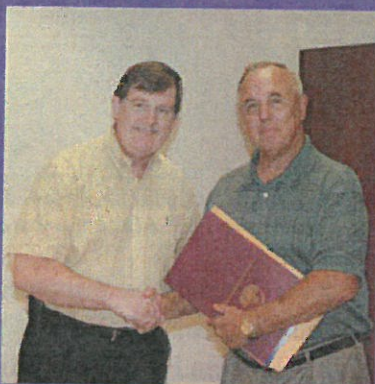
*The Alabama Rural Development Office and the Black Belt Commission
wish Senator Sanders well!!*



Senator Sanders served as Co-Chair of the Black Belt Commission, along with Margaret Bentley and Mayor Sheldon Day.

BBC MEMBERS RECEIVE LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

On April 27th, Alabama Rural Development Director Ron Sparks presented BBC Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs with legislative resolutions recognizing their years of service to the Black Belt Commission.



John Clyde Riggs, Director, Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission



John Zippert, Chair, Agriculture Committee



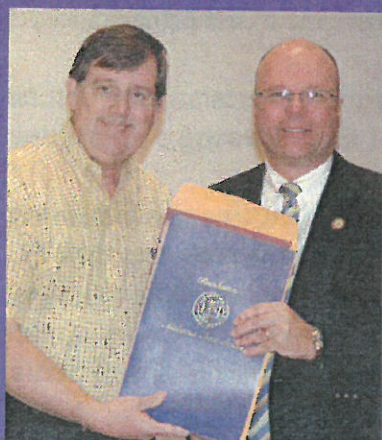
Dr. Carol Zippert, Chair, Cultural and Youth Committee



Donald Mills, Chair, Small Business Committee



Tyson Howard, Director, South Central Alabama Development Commission



Mayor Sheldon Day, Co-Chair



Dr. Daniel Boyd, Chair, Education Committee



Margaret Bentley, Co-Chair

ALABAMA Partnership for TeleHealth

The Alabama Rural Development Office, in conjunction with the Southeastern TeleHealth Resource Center, held a TeleHealth Workgroup meeting to continue discussion of the creation of the Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth. The meeting was held at the Alabama Center for Commerce in Montgomery on July 26, 2012. Ron Sparks, Director of the Alabama Rural Development Office, welcomed the 40+ professionals from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Corrections, the University of Alabama, UAB, UAH, Department of Mental Health, HMS Advantage, Alabama Medicaid, the Governor's Office, Baptist Health, Alabama Hospital Association, Department of Education and Alabama Supercomputer, to name a few.

"I am elated to have the caliber of representatives here today from so many agencies that can be positively affected by this program. It's a win-win situation," stated Sparks.

Jessica Dent, Executive Director of ConnectingALABAMA, talked about the collaboration of ConnectingALABAMA and the Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth and informed attendees about the ConnectingALABAMA/TeleHealth Fall Conference that will be held October 17-19, 2012, at The Marriott Legends at Capitol Hill in Prattville. Connecting ALABAMA and the Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth, Inc. (APT), a new charitable nonprofit corporation with a focus on increasing access to healthcare through the innovative use of technology, are working together to improve and promote the availability and provision of healthcare services in rural and underserved parts of Alabama.

APT's Mission is to educate and provide training and technical assistance to hospitals, clinics and primary care providers to implement and achieve access to healthcare that is efficient, high quality and cost effective, and to reduce the service barriers that exist for patients who live in rural parts of Alabama at a distance from hospitals and other medical facilities. Reliable broadband is essential to the success of APT's mission.

An explanation of the Southeastern TeleHealth Resource Center (SETRC) was given by Rena Brewer, SETRC Director and Paula Guy, CEO, Global Partnership for TeleHealth, gave an introduction of the Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth, Inc. a charitable nonprofit corporation. An impressive live telehealth connection was demonstrated.

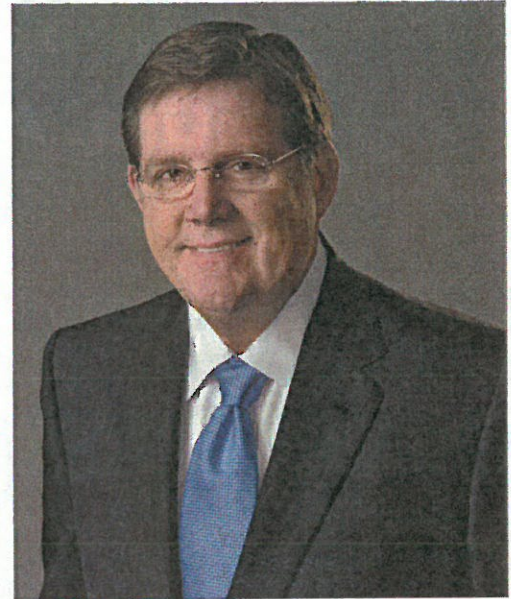
"Serving as a Physician Governor gives me a unique perspective on the health problems facing Alabama. I have seen the impact that a shortage of providers can have on a rural community. I am committed to working with the provider community, stakeholders and insurers across the state to make the telemedicine effort a success." Robert Bentley, Governor of Alabama.

Mr. Lloyd Sirmons, Alabama Partnership Telehealth Manager, gave a brief overview of the project and the direction its taking in Alabama.

Participants were asked about current participation in any telehealth programs or projects and about their vision for telemedicine. Each attendee was asked to serve on one or more of the following committees: Legislation, Policy, Funding and Distance Learning.

"During my eight-year tenure as Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, I learned firsthand of the desperate need for improved healthcare services throughout the state---especially in the rural areas where so many of our citizens are in poor health and suffer from chronic medical conditions. They do not have access to the medical care they need. This (TeleHealth) initiative would profoundly impact patient care and outcomes, as well as healthcare providers and the communities they serve." Ron Sparks, Director, Alabama Rural Development Office.

With support of Governor Robert Bentley and Ron Sparks, the Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth will provide an opportunity for TeleHealth service to expand and provide greater access to healthcare to all of Alabama.



Ron Sparks, Director of the Alabama Rural Development Office

You are Invited to the *Broadband & TeleHealth Summit 2012*

ConnectingALABAMA and Alabama Partnership for TeleHealth, Inc.
cordially invite you to attend the **Broadband TeleHealth Summit 2012**
October 17-19, 2012 – The Marriott Legends at Capitol Hill, Prattville, Alabama

How Do You Benefit?

Learn about Healthcare Policies relating to Government and Economic Development • Network with Healthcare Professionals • Discover How TeleHealth Affects Your Business • Make Contacts in Industries that Impact Your Profession • Develop new Outreach of your Products / Services

Who is Attending?

Rural & Specialty Physicians • Nurses • Administrators • Nursing Homes • Technology Providers • Insurance Providers • Hospital & Clinic Staff • Public Health Representatives • IT Representatives • School-Based Health • Economic Developers • State & Local Policy Advisors

Host Hotel: Marriott Legends at Capitol Hill, 2500 Legends Circle, Prattville, Alabama 36066, 800.228.9290

More information: Jessica Dent, Executive Director, ConnectingALABAMA
334-353-5682 / Jessica.Dent@adeca.Alabama.gov

Presented by:



http://www.alabamatelehealth.com/?page_id=28

BLACK BELT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AND THE BBC CULTURAL AND YOUTH COMMITTEE Black Belt 100 Lenses Project

Forty-one students from across the Black Belt region of Alabama joined together June 10 - 14, 2012 for the third annual Black Belt 100 Lenses Summer Camp. Public and private high school students spent five days on the University of Alabama campus after taking photographs throughout the 2011-12 school year representing the culture of their respective communities.

Begun in 2007 as a partnership between the Black Belt Community Foundation and the University of Alabama's Center for Community-Based Partnerships (CCBP), the Black Belt 100 Lenses Project has developed into a respected forum for the youth of the Alabama Black Belt region to voice their appreciation for and concerns about their communities. The project seeks to depict the culture of the Black Belt region of Alabama through the eyes of its youth. Based on the PhotoVoice method, the project combines photography with grassroots social action, encouraging students to think critically about the issues in their communities and to take charge as leaders to address those issues through civic discussion, participation, and action.

KIDCHECK

UAB partnership provides free health screenings to Birmingham city school children

Published: Thursday, February 16, 2012, 12:21 PM

Updated: Thursday, February 16, 2012, 12:21 PM

By Marie Leech -- The Birmingham News

Follow

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- JaKenzie Fisher is a little young to have to worry about high blood pressure. And even though she doesn't have it, the 6-year-old admits the check is her favorite part of going to the doctor's office.

This morning, the doctor's office came to her.

A first-grader at Birmingham's Glen Iris Elementary School, Fisher is one of about 50 students at the school to receive free head-to-toe health checkups, thanks to a new partnership with KidCheck and the University of Alabama at Birmingham Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and Nursing.

"They took my blood pressure, checked my teeth and they also took my temperature," JaKenzie said. "I had a lot of fun and I think my mom is going to be proud." That's because medical students from UAB told JaKenzie she was healthy, had good vision and had clean teeth.

The UAB Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and Nursing received a \$100,000 grant through the DentaQuest Foundation to conduct the free school-based health screenings to children in Birmingham city schools. The project, called 'Smiles for Alabama,' unites students from each of the UAB departments with Sight Savers America's KidCheck Department to screen children and identify those children who need follow-up care.

"Students are supposed to look at the weight and height of the children, check their blood pressure, ears, nose and throat, listen to their heart to see if there are any murmurs, check their lungs and also look at their muscular skeletal system to check for scoliosis," said Dr. Hussein Latif, associate professor at UAB's School of Medicine, who specializes in pediatrics.

UAB KIDCHECK

KidCheck partners with UAB Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and nursing to bring health screenings to Birmingham school children. The group will be providing head-to-toe CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 (KIDCHECK)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6 (**KIDCHECK**)

screenings to select Birmingham city schools. The project, called "Smiles for Alabama" unites students from each of these UAB departments to conduct health screenings for elementary children. 44 first graders at Glen Iris Elementary had the screenings Thursday February 16, 2012. (The Birmingham News/Joe Songer).

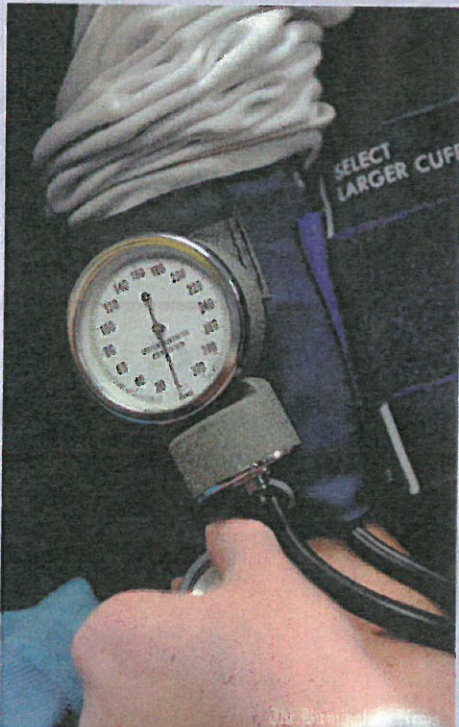
Watch video

Students are also getting their vision checked, as well as their teeth, he said. Glen Iris students who received permission from their parent or guardian were screened, and a typed report was given to their parents at the end of the day.

The children needing further care were referred to other doctors at UAB.

Glen Iris Principal Mike Wilson said the health screenings are important to ensure the overall well-being of his students.

"If a child isn't healthy in all aspects, it affects his learning," Wilson said. "And if it's just one particular problem with their health, it compounds and usually causes other problems with their overall health."



A student gets her blood pressure checked. Kid-Check partners with UAB Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and nursing to bring health screenings to Birmingham school children. The group will be providing head-to-toe health screenings to select Birmingham city schools. The project, called "Smiles for Alabama" unites students from each of these UAB departments to conduct health screenings for elementary children. 44 first graders at Glen Iris Elementary had the screenings Thursday February 16, 2012. (The Birmingham News/Joe Songer).



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Janiya Johnson gets her hearing checks by UAB med student Kimberly Green. Kid-Check partners with UAB Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and nursing to bring health screenings to Birmingham school children. The group will be providing head-to-toe health screenings to select Birmingham city schools. The project, called "Smiles for Alabama" unites students from each of these UAB departments to conduct health screenings for elementary children. 44 first graders at Glen Iris Elementary had the screenings Thursday February 16, 2012. (The Birmingham News/Joe Songer).

BBC INFRASTRUCTURE CHAIR RECEIVES MULTIPLE HONORS

Black Belt Commission Infrastructure Chair, Beatrice Mills Forniss, has been a recipient of multiple honors in the last few months. To begin with, Bea, as she's affectionately known, became the Division Chief for the Community and Economic Development Division of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs at the beginning of the year. She was formerly the Unit director for the Governor's Resources for Economic Assistance Program. The newly created position consolidates several ADECA programs under one umbrella. Forniss will oversee the following units: Administrative and Special Projects Unit, Resources and Economic Assistance Programs Unit, Recreation and Conservation Unit, Community Services Block Grant Unit, Emergency Shelter Grant Unit, Broadband Initiative Unit, Appalachian Regional Commission Unit, and Long-term Recovery Unit. She quotes, "It's an awesome responsibility. My plate was already full, and then God saw fit to put some more peas on it."



Beatrice M. Forniss Division Chief of the Community and Economic Development Division of ADECA.

If that weren't enough, Bea has been elected to serve as Alabama State University National Alumni Association President for the next two years and Chair of the Alabama State University Foundation. Bea will be expected to provide critical leadership in these positions. When she was elected President of the National Alumni Association, she pledged to get the NAA back to the basics and focus on the "5-Point Program For Success" that includes increasing the membership, fundraising and planned giving, communication, and recognition of outstanding alumni members who contribute to the association and to society as a whole.

(Parts of article taken from Black Belt Connection< Volume III-Edition I and the National Alumni Association newsletter)

BUSINESS CENTER OPENS IN DOWNTOWN SELMA

While in Selma August 14, 2012, attending the Black Belt Commission meeting, several attendees made a stop at The Business Center, a new venture of William Scott, formerly of Congresswoman Terri Sewell's office in Selma. The center is located at 112 Lauderdale Street, Selma, AL 36701.



On hand to tour the center was Donald Mills, Small Business, Emily Law, BBC, Bea Forniss, Infrastructure, Candy Capel, Program Manager, William Scott (3rd from left), Jessica Dent, Connect Alabama, and Ron Sparks, ARDO Director.

SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE HOSTS 2012 Y.E.S. SUMMIT, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SEMINAR and TECH WORKSHOP

BBC Small Business Committee and SBDC hosted 2012 Youth Entrepreneur Success Summit

The University of West Alabama's Division of Outreach Services- Small Business Development Center hosted a one day Youth Entrepreneur Success Summit "Say YES" on May 8, 2012, at the Livingston Community Center in Livingston, AL. The Youth Entrepreneur Success Summit is a one-day camp held each May in recognition of National Small Business Month. Approximately 65 local high school students gathered to hear from several speakers on everything from developing a business idea to business plan writing.



Donald Mills

Guest speakers for the 2012 Y.E.S. Summit included: Mr. Freddie Scott, II, former NFL football player and founder and president of Unlock the Champion, Inc. who spoke on success, leadership and team spirit. Mrs. Brandy Gibson, owner of BFG and Associates spoke on Small Business Protocol and Business Luncheon Etiquette. Following these presentations, the students were treated to a wonderful lunch. Mr. William Scott a young and recent business owner wrapped up the day by speaking to the students on how he is becoming successful as a small business owner and what it takes to become an entrepreneur. Students in attendance were from Sumter Central High School, Christ Temple Christian Academy, and the HERO program from Greensboro, AL.

Mills said the event was designed to help young people believe in themselves and what they can accomplish. He quoted Mark Twain, who said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your tasks into small, manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one."

Disaster Preparedness Seminar Hosted by UWA'S Small Business Development Center & BBC Small Business Committee

The Small Business Development Center at UWA in conjunction with the Small Business Committee of Governor Bentley's Black Belt Commission hosted a one day Disaster Preparedness Seminar. The seminar was held May 24, 2012, at the Demopolis Higher Education Center from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The seminar provided participants with disaster preparedness information from Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross-Central Alabama Office and the Small Business Administration.

Donald Mills, committee chairman, said the workshop was targeted towards entrepreneurs and existing small business owners who may not be prepared to recover quickly after a natural disaster. "We brought together experts who could answer all their questions in one place," Mills says. The workshop featured sessions that allowed participants to learn more about why they should plan ahead for disaster recovery, important tips on regional emergency management and what is included in the Red Cross Ready Tool Kit. Participating in the workshop were Donald Mills of UWA, Mike Grayson, Mayor of Demopolis, and Wesley Glass with the American Red Cross. Collaborating Co-Sponsors included: FEMA, American Red Cross-Central Alabama Office and Marengo & Sumter County EMA.

Small Business Development Hosts Tech Workshop

The Small Business Development Committee hosted a technology workshop in conjunction with the University of West Alabama's Small Business Development Center at the Demopolis Higher Education Center.

The workshop was targeted towards entrepreneurs and existing small business owners who may feel intimidated by technology. "We brought together experts who could answer all sorts of technology questions," said committee chairman Donald Mills. "We covered smart phones, computer programs and the internet." Participants learned about eBay, Microsoft programs, and how to use smart phones for business applications. One of the presentations was about how to accept credit card payments via cell phone, something that may open up more avenues for revenue for small business owners.

The companies Intuit and Mobile Zapp sent representatives to give presentations. Henry Neff, a certified eBay trainer and author of a book about how to sell on eBay was also a speaker at the event.

Committee member Cecil Williamson of Demopolis said the workshop was specifically designed to appeal to retirees who wanted to know how to sell on eBay. Brenda Rayburn, a retiree who attended for that purpose, said the workshop was "an excellent event. The material was informative and well presented."

WARC's Current Grant Activities in Greene, Hale and Pickens Counties TOTAL \$3,757,000

Greene County

- Industrial Development Authority master plan for the Crossroads of America Industrial Park - \$238,000
- Industrial Development Board water and sewer infrastructure in the Crossroads of America Industrial Park - \$285,000
- Mapping water systems throughout Greene County using GPS and GIS satellite technology - \$50,000
- Eutaw water system improvements - \$400,000

Hale County

- University of Alabama Hale County Health Collaborative - \$202,000
- Moundville water and sewer rehabilitation - \$400,000
- Moundville Comprehensive Plan - \$22,000
- Pre-kindergarten program (HIPPO) for Hale County Board of Education - \$150,000

Pickens County

- Storm shelters and safety equipment throughout Pickens County - \$933,000 (pending)
- Carrollton Sewer System upgrades - \$400,000
- Mapping Pickens County Natural Gas District using GPS and GIS satellite technology - \$50,000 (pending)
- Pickens County Water Authority system improvements - \$573,000 (pending)

Greene, Hale, Pickens

- Disaster recovery/continuity of operations for businesses - \$54,000 (approximate share of \$125,000 grant)

Golden Dragon chooses Alabama's Wilcox County for \$100 million copper tubing plant

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. --**Golden Dragon Copper** of China will build a \$100 million copper tubing plant in Pine Hill in Wilcox County with the potential of creating up to 500 jobs.

Gov. Robert Bentley said today he had signed an economic development agreement with the company to bring the plant to the Black Belt county.



George Alford, manager of the Wilcox County Industrial Development Authority and Chair of the Black Belt Commission Manufacturing Committee, played integral role.

The plant will operate as **GD Copper (U.S.A) Inc.** with initial plans to hire 300 workers and the possibility of adding 200 more in the years ahead. **AIDT**, the state's worker training program, will handle hiring and training for the company.

GD Copper will be an application center for the most modern copper tube mill in the world, employing a state-of-the-art "cast and roll" technology, processing methodology and equipment. The company will be the third Chinese manufacturer to locate in Alabama -- a country the state has focused on for foreign investment.

"I am committed to putting Alabamians back to work, and this is welcome news for a part of the state that has long been in need of new jobs," Bentley said in a statement.

"This project shows how Alabama remains an attractive investment for international companies," he added. "Already, more than 65,000 people are employed by international companies that have operations in Alabama, and we will continue to recruit international companies to Alabama."

The jobs are needed in Wilcox County, which has the highest unemployment rate in the state -- 16.3 percent in December 2011, more than twice the state average of 8.1 percent. The county had a rate of 19.7 percent in December 2010.

George Alford, manager of the **Wilcox County Industrial Development Authority**, said the project is one of the largest economic development events in the county's history.

"Recently, we were named the 15th poorest county in the United States," Alford said. "We believe this project is the first major step in reducing our high unemployment and poverty rates."

The **Alabama Development Office** led the recruitment of the company for the state.

"We are glad that GD Copper (U.S.A.) Inc. is joining us as corporate partners, and we look forward to helping the company grow and prosper in Alabama," Greg Canfield, ADO director, said in a release. "Wilcox County and the surrounding region came together cooperatively to make this project a reality and bring much-needed jobs to the area."

The project has been eyeing the Black Belt region of the state for more than a year.

"Working on the Golden Dragon Project with Alabama over the past 16 months has been one of my career's most rewarding experiences," Raymond Cheng, CEO of **SoZo Group** and a corporate advisor and consultant for the project, said in a statement. "It is easy to see how Alabama has earned a reputation for being open to international business. We look forward to working through the formal approval process from both Chinese and U.S. governing bodies so this project may move to groundbreaking."

Golden Dragon had planned and announced an original project in Clarke County last year. But the project grew to such a size, it shifted to a larger site in adjacent Wilcox County.

"The GD Copper (U.S.A.), Inc. project is a prime example of how quickly the industrial marketplace can change," Thomasville Mayor Sheldon Day said in a release. "After announcing the project in Thomasville last year, the company found it needed a much larger site to serve long-term needs. The City of Thomasville partnered with Wilcox County in securing the new site, proving county lines should never be a deterrent in luring projects to a region of Alabama."

"We are very encouraged to have this company coming to Wilcox County," Pine Hill Mayor Harry Mason said in a statement. "It is an exciting economic development opportunity for the area."

ADO is a sponsor of the **Alabama China Partnership's Spring Symposium** March 15-16 in Monroeville. Several Chinese government, business, and media officials are expected to attend the event, including representatives of up to 50 businesses from China. More information is found **here** Aneesa McMillan - U.S. Representative Terri A. Sewell (AL-7) Two 20th Street North, Ste 1130 Birmingham, AL 35203 (O): 205-254-1960 (C): 205-603-0558 aneesa.mcmillan@mail.house.gov

Education Committee Hosts School Improvement Summit

The Education Committee, in association with Lowndes County Schools, held a School Improvement Summit on June 19 and 20, 2012, at the Renaissance Hotel and Conference Center in Montgomery. More than 180 participants enjoyed sessions on how to improve their schools' reading and math programs, graduation exam scores, discipline, and classroom structure while sparking and maintaining student interest. Ten districts across the Black Belt were represented. Mary Anne Martin, a member of the Education Committee, said, "It was a great event for networking, and the presentations were very well done." Charles Nash, also a committee member, commended Daniel Boyd, Superintendent of Lowndes County Schools and Chairman of the Education Committee, for his leadership in creating such an outstanding event.

Widest Yard Sale Continued form page 1) that day were delighted with the number of people who had been there shopping all three days. Just out of Selma on U. S. 80, another hot spot was Angie's Flea Market on County Road 44. The owners had posted signs all along U. S. 80 several miles before arriving at their location guiding people to the off-route auction house. Upon arrival, Law discovered as many as twenty vendors set up close to the auction house with any item you could possibly hope to find from antique tools to some great tasting barbeque. Owners of Angie's Auction were excited about the large turnout even on the first day with intermittent showers. They were expecting 1,000 people by Saturday.

The yard sale was made possible by a grant from the Alabama Tourism Department.



The original \$25,000 grant applied for yielded \$10,000 and that figure was reduced due to prororation. It was not an easy task to stretch these funds to cover the entire expense of the yard sale to include the cost of advertising, signs, and website design. Pam Swanner, Chair of the Marketing and Tourism Committee, managed to leverage advertising dollars to include some free advertising and articles from newspapers and magazines. Local TV stations blanketed Cramton Bowl in Montgomery every day of the sale, and Al Benn, noted columnist, wrote three consecutive articles about the sale giving it much needed exposure.

The committee is waiting on proceeds from a matching grant that will pay one-half the costs of producing the website and other associated work. "With these funds we'll be able to expand the website to include the Rural Development Office and the Black Belt Commission," Law reported. "We're also beginning to look at sources of funding for next year. It's a known fact we need to concentrate on more advertising," stated Law and everyone on the committee agreed with that statement.



SCENES FROM
"WIDEST YARD SALE"

“Alabama Black Belt 2012”

Innovative Readiness Training

Article from Greene County Democrat-

Operation Black Belt treats more than 22,000 people – estimated value approximately three million dollars

ALABAMA – By the end of the day on Wednesday, Operation “Alabama Black Belt 2012,” operated through the Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training Program, tracked more than 29,000 patient encounters. The Department of Defense estimates that is around 22,000 individuals, a number that quadrupled expectations.

From May 1 to 10, residents and neighbors of Hayneville, Selma, and Demopolis have been eligible to receive free medical and dental services from 250 medical personnel from across the nation with the National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, and Air Force Reserve. This initiative is a premiere world-class field training event for military forces and provides significant care to the residents of the medically under-served and economically depressed communities of Selma, Demopolis, and Hayneville, Alabama.

DRA Federal Co-Chairman Chris Masingill said, “Increasing access to affordable, quality healthcare in the Delta improves lives and communities. The overwhelming response over the last two weeks affirms how valuable the Armed Forces and Innovative Readiness Training are in our Region. The Delta Regional Authority will continue working to get important programs like this in our area.”

Jim Byrd Jr., Director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs which administers the DRA program in Alabama said the event was a success for everyone involved. “I know those who benefitted from these services are appreciative of this program and its success is shown in the numbers,” he said. “We are deeply indebted for the work performed by dedicated service people and the commitment made to the area by the Delta Regional Authority.”

Operation “Alabama Black Belt 2012” – Delivering Free Medical and Dental Care to Delta Families

*Total patients in the three-county area of Alabama Total Patient Encounters: 29,173

*Financial Value: more than \$3 million

***Hayneville, AL** - Total Patient Encounters: 5,140

* **Selma, AL** - Total Patient Encounters: 12,752

***Demopolis, AL** - Total Patient Encounters: 11,476

Residents of the Delta region, including the Alabama Black Belt, consistently suffers from poor health outcomes. Compared with national rates, deaths in the Delta region from circulatory diseases are 16 percent higher and deaths from cancer are 12 percent higher. Between 2002 and 2006, infant mortality rates in the Delta region were almost 41 percent higher than non-Delta counties.

The Delta Regional Authority is congressionally mandated to identify and provide investment to help create jobs, build communities and improve lives in the 252 counties and parishes of the Delta. In the past three years through a partnership with the Department of Defense, more than 70,000 Delta residents have received free medical and dental care. For more information, please visit: www.dra.gov.

Representatives from the DRA said that from this past operation, more than 20,000 pair of eyeglasses were being ground. Information on how and when the glasses may be picked up can be obtained from **(Continued on page 14)**

“Alabama Black Belt 2012” Continued from page 13) the City Clerk in Selma.

No numbers were available for the dental work but on a conference call regarding the program, it was revealed that most of the people seen had never received any sort of dental care, and one man had to have 21 teeth removed.

The chief medical problems of the people seen were related in some way to obesity, such as diabetes. During that call, members of the Operation spoke of how many of the patients seen had come from smaller communities throughout the region and that many of them had heard of the program through word of mouth.

NOTE: *The Alabama Black Belt 2012 Innovative Readiness Training was held May 1-10, 2012 in Hayneville, Selma and Demopolis. The purpose of the civil-Military Program is to improve military readiness while simultaneously providing quality services to communities throughout America. These programs are in keeping with a long military tradition, leveraging training to benefit both units and their home communities. They are strongly supported by the Department of Defense, Congress, the states and communities. The military services have always brought to bear their extensive resources to help meet some of the country's civil needs. DOD realizes the simultaneous benefits these civil-military programs can offer to military readiness. The Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) gives the military the ability to train its medical personnel by providing medical care in rural underserved areas.*



Governor Bentley and DRA Federal Co-Chairman Chris Masingill speak at a press conference in Hayneville April 30, 2012.

“Alabama Black Belt 2012”

Governor Bentley visits with young girl receiving treatment.



DUCK DYNASTY MATRIARCH, TEEN REAL ESTATE MOGUL SPEAK AT BLACK BELT COMMISSION EVENT

Reality TV star and teen land baroness address crowd at Homegrown Business Conference

By Ginger Rue

Besides being media darlings, what do a grandmother from Louisiana and a fifteen-year-old Florida girl have in common?

On September 28, they were both keynote speakers at the Small Business Development Committee's Homegrown Business Conference.

Kay Robertson, known to fans of the hit reality show Duck Dynasty as "Miss Kay," and Willow Tufano, who became a landlady when she bought a foreclosed home and rented it for profit at the age of fourteen, addressed the crowd of roughly two hundred people at Shelton State Community College. About two-thirds of the audience was composed of students from schools in Hale, Greene, and Sumter counties. These students attended free of charge as part of the Black Belt Commission's efforts to reach out to potential youth entrepreneurs in the Commission's target counties.

Tufano, who has appeared on The Ellen Show, National Public Radio, Inside Edition, CNN and Fox News, just to name a few media outlets, told attendees, "If I can do it, anyone can." She explained how she started making money by picking up refuse off the side of the road and repairing or refinishing items other people had cast away, then selling those items. Tufano also bought items at garage sales or on Craig's List and resold them at a profit. It wasn't long before she had enough money for half the down payment on a foreclosed home; she borrowed the rest, fixed up the house, and now has tenants who pay monthly rent.

"I have ADHD," Tufano told the audience. "And a teacher once told me I would never be able to do much because of it. But I did. So don't let anyone or anything stop you from doing what you want to do."

Later, at the luncheon, Robertson's speech was frequently interrupted with applause as she shared her personal keys to success. Robertson's family lived in poverty until their business, Duck Commander, took off. The company manufactures duck calls that are favorites in the hunting community. Her advice for the audience? Keep a positive attitude and trust God. Robertson quoted many passages from the Bible, including Deuteronomy 6: 1-2, "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." Robertson credited this mindset with her family's business and personal success.



Willow Tufano and her Mother

Other speakers at the event included CPA Bert Sims of Way, Ray, and Shelton; Ben Wilkin of Taco Casa, Inc.; David Ramp of the Small Business Administration; Julie Herndon of Axxess Web Technologies; and Lisa Riley of Accion Finance. Lynn Libell of the University of North Alabama gave a special presentation for youth on the topic of bullying. Gary Walton of Tuskegee University also led a breakout session for youth on the topic of leadership.

Ron Sparks, Director of Alabama's Office of Rural Development, said he personally enjoyed the conference and was proud of the Commission's efforts. "I made sure to get Miss Kay's autograph for the Governor, too," Sparks said.

Donald Mills, Chairman of the Small Business Development Committee, said, "Our hope is that people left inspired and educated about entrepreneurial opportunities."



Ron Sparks, ARDO Director, Kay Robertson of Duck Dynasty, and Donald Mills, Chair, BBC Small Business Committee

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